GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

October 2015

Monthly news on the struggle against the Jeju Naval base project

Published by Gangjeong Village in Jeju, South Korea

Gangjeong awarded the IPB Peace Prize

Image by Yayoi Tsuchida, IPB

The International Peace Bureau awarded the Sean MacBride Peace Prize to the Gangjeon villagers from Jeju Island, South Korea, for their profound commitment to peace and the continuous resistance to the construction of a naval base on the island.

On October 23rd, Ko Kwon Il (Go Gwon Il), co-vice mayor of the Gangjeong village and co-vice chair of the Villagers' Anti-Base Committee, traveled to Italy to receive the Sean Macbride Peace Prize awarded by the International Peace Bureau, one of the oldest foundations of peace. The award is dedicated to a "person or organization that has done outstanding work for peace, disarmament and/or human rights."

For 2015, the Bureau awarded the people of Gangjeong Village the distinguished medal of peace along with people of Lampedusa, Italy. It is truly an honor for the villagers to receive this award, a validation of the struggles that Gangjeong has fought and have been supported through by the international community. This recognition also serves as a beacon of hope and support against the troubles that are to come once the naval base construction is completed.

Vice mayor Ko emphasized that the Jeju Naval Base has become a big concern to the peace of North Asia region and to the world. He also appealed to the international community to continue to be aware of and support the peace movement in Gangjeong.

On the day, the vice mayor's speech was followed by a screening of 'Ghosts of Jeju' by Director Regis Trembly. The day that vice mayor Ko attended the ceremony to receive this award it was officially the 3102nd day of struggle since the Gangjeong Village created the villagers' anti-base committee on May 18, 2007.

Peace activist Choi Sunghee said "I hope this good news can be a turning point for residents and peace activists living in Gangjeong to be encouraged and empowered. I believe this peace prize is awarded not only to Gangjeong Village but also to all those people who are opposing military bases around the world."

The International Peace Bureau (IPB) founded in 1891, is one of the world's oldest international peace organizations. The organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910 for acting as a link between peace societies across various countries.

4th year anniversary of Catholic Solidarity

By Deborah Eunjoo Kang (Catholic Human Rights Committee)

To commemorate the 4th year anniversary of its launch, 'the Catholic Church Solidarity to Make Peace on Jeju Island' offered a life and peace mass on 12 October in front of the Jeju naval base construction gate. It was October 2011 when 3,735 priests and believers gathered to pray for peace on Jeju and throughout the world and launch the Catholic Church Solidarity to Make Peace on Jeju Island.

The solidarity group is composed of various Catholic groups, including 15 Committees of Justice & Peace Archdiocese nationwide. This humble group has built solidarity with the villagers and peace keepers of Gangjeong in an effort to share suffering with them. It was through the mass run in front of the Jeju naval base construction gate on Mondays and Tuesdays, which this group was in charge of, where the committee connected with the community.

Even though the military base construction may reach the stages of completion, the hearts of us who visited the village for the first time in the name of Catholic solidarity will not be changed. We will, above all, continuously remind ourselves of the reasons of our first steps to Gangjeong four years ago.

We believe that the strength of this movement has been mostly thanks to the power of the village community. As we know, peace is the way, and we will walk alongside the villagers towards peace.

Image by Park Yong-sung. For the first time in 30 years, Gangjeong enjoys the harvest of rice, a very rare crop on the volcanic island of Jeju.

By Choi Hye-Young

Gangjeong Solidarity with Other Grass root Movements

The wounded know the other wounded people's pain. As the Gangjeong villagers have become our uncles, the discharged Ssangyong workers have become our brothers and comrades. We call Miryang elders our grandmas and grandpas, and the mothers of the Yongsan and Sewol tragedy have become our neighbors.

When the Miryang elders came to Gangjeong for their Jeju peace trip they sat alongside the Catholic priests and sisters in front of the base construction gate.

Mr. Kim Deuk-Jung, a laid-off worker and the head of the Ssangyong Motor branch under the Korean Metal Workers Union, recently carried out 45 days' hunger strike.The people in Gangjeong were sure to video chat with him when we couldn't travel the far distance between him and us, and were sure to also visit him in person at his fasting location.

Then there is the situation faced by workers at Colt/Coltec Inc., a company which used to produce guitars. The President of Colt/Coltec Inc. unjustly dismissed its workers, moved the company overseas after and proceeded to close down the company. The workers' of Colt/Coltec Inc. have struggled longer than 3000 days.

Recently, Kim Moo-Sung, a representative of the conservative ruling party made ludicrous statements, that Colt/Coltec is a case that a militant labor union has brought a company in collapse. In protest to this statement, Bang Jong-Woon, previous chairman of the Incheon branch of Colt/ Coltec commenced a hunger strike with no definite term.

As of October 30 he had been fasting for 26 days. When we sent him photos of us holding signs in support of him, we were remembering his participation in our struggle against military residence construction early this year, which resulted in his arrest. Each of the movements in Gangjeong, Miryang, Ssangyong and Colt/Coltec could be a lonely island, but with warmer friendship and stronger solidarity, those islands have gradually grown.

By Kirak

Palestinian Activist Visits Gangjeong

On October 14, Palestinian youth activist Karam ran a nonviolent direct action workshop and lecture in Gangjeong on the current situation in Palestine. He was visiting on what was discovered was his birthday in solidarity with the struggle which he also documented through his photojournalism.

Karam has extensive experience training international activists in nonviolent direct action tactics and techniques and he shared some of these with those who attended the workshop. The type of violence faced by Gangjeong villagers differs from that faced by Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation, but it was clear that local activists are very experienced in using nonviolent direct action tactics.

Following the workshop, Karam gave a talk about a village where he has worked as a medic for many years called Nabi Saleh in the occupied West Bank and a general update on the struggle against Israeli military occupation which has noticeably grown in its intensity in the past month, with more than 70 Palestinians killed in October alone.

Karam is a coordinator with the International Solidarity Movement and was invited to Korea by Palestine Peace and Solidarity in South Korea (PPS) using a local government grant awarded by the Seoul Youth Hub.

While these events were part of a larger speaking and training tour that Karam subsequently conducted across Seoul, his trip highlight was spending time in the village in which he was warmly welcomed. During his talk, he discussed the warmth of Palestinian villagers of Nabi Saleh, who welcome solidarity protestors into their homes every Friday morning around the time of their regular protests. Karam drew a parallel between the warmth and generosity of Gangjeong villagers and those of Nabi Saleh.

Days before he departed from Korea, he learned of the death of another friend named Hashem Azzeh, this time killed by Israeli military tear gas inhalation in Hebron.

By Park Seok-Boon, Solidarity for Peace and Reunification of Korea

The Dangerous Alliance

After the security bill that would support the Japanese exercise on the right to collective self-defense was forcefully railroaded in the Upper House of Japan, ROK Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-Ahn remarked on Oct. 14 that ROK can allow the Japanese self-defense' to enter its territories. Following Hwang's announcement, Nakatani Gen, Defense Minister of Japan made a remark in the ROK-Japan defense minister meeting on Oct. 20 that there is no need for South Korea's approval when the Japanese Self-Defense force makes entry into North Korea, reasoning that North Korea is not the South Korean territory by international law. Furthermore, Han Min-Goo, Minister of National Defense of ROK told that the ROK-US-Japan would closely talk on that matter trying to prove that South Korean government is allowing the Japanese military's entry to the Korean peninsula. In the ROK-US-Japan security talk that was held right after the ROK-Japan defense minister's meeting talk, a discussion on the Japanese military's re-invasion of the Korean peninsula was processed. The US-Japan and ROK-US combined maritime drill mobilized the Reagan Nuclear aircraft carrier, staged in the East Sea, as well as the south seas of Jeju and Busan. The ROK-US-Japan trilateral alliance led by the United States is being established with the premise that the Japanese military will step into Korea and with the facilitation of the THAAD deployment. The Koreans should stop the Japanese military's re-invasion of Korea which would be a crucial obstacle for the peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula.

Image by Gangjeong Village Story. On Sunday the 11th of October we held a small farewell for Lina as she left Korea end of October in order to continue her studies. The evening included poetry reading, singing and yummy food and drinks that all friends enjoyed together. Lina is a long-time friend of Gangjeong who has actively worked in the Gangjeong village international team.

International Solidarity

Image by an event participant/ Karam, a Palestinian activist, visited Gangjeong on Oct. 14.

Buried cultural relics are discovered at naval base, again.

By Joyakgol

Archaeological artifacts have been discovered once again at the new entry road of the Jeju naval base construction site. The research and excavation project commenced in November 2014 by the Jeju Archaeology Institute and will continue until December 2015. Recently, ceramic tools and house sites have been discovered and the relics date back 2,000 years to the Bronze age.

As we all remember, massive amount of cultural relics were found at the designated military base area in September 2011, right after the navy set up fences to seal off the Gangjeong shore and Gureombi rock. Back then, we hoped the newly unearthed prehistoric remains could possibly scrap the base construction plan because experts on artifacts stressed that the Gangjeong area on southern tip of Jeju Island had similar archaeological significance as prehistoric site in Samyang-dong on Jeju's northeastern coast. According to an established theory of how humans first arrived on the island, logical explanation was that they came from Korean peninsula and thus they first settled in northern shore of Jeju as Samyang has traces of the earliest settlers. However, the first excavation of Gangjeong village might have contradicted this theory if the area had not been cut off by barbed wires. The experts couldn't access the whole area, and the relics were buried sporadically.

Even after these discoveries the excavation process in 2011 was approved to continue and important history was deleted. At this time it was seen as just a formality, but now we have a second chance. The experts are saying it is still too early to tell what results the unearthing investigation can bring. They will decide what to do with the relics after a consultation meeting. But we cannot depend on academics to defend this important cultural heritage. Once again, the people's history is being annihilated. We need to remember the military base is being built on our history.

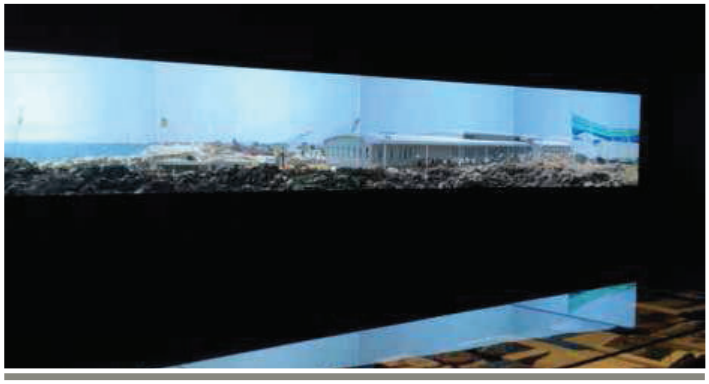

Image by Grace. Installation view of Angela Melitopolous's video installation with cartographic vitrine, The Refrain, at the group exhibition named Interrupted Survey: Fractured Modern Mythologies in Asia Cultural Centre, Gwangju, South Korea. "The installation draws comparative juxtaposition and identifies underground solidarities between the Ryuku Islands and Jeju Island, and their respective histories of violence and resistance (From the work description)."

Trial Updates

› On 29 October the Jeju local court handed down the decision of not guilty to six people including five villagers such as mayor Cho Kyung-Chul and Ms. Kim Miryang and peace activist Park Sung-Soo (nicknamed Dungree who is currently being jailed in Daeku for the charge of damaging the honor of the President). The prosecutors have indicted all six under the charge of Special Obstruction of Justice, in relation to the accident on 27 February, 2012, when the police blocked the port to those heading out to sea to deliver food and medicine for the peace activists stationed on Gureombi Rock. On the day, the clash with the police was so severe that some people were carried to hospital via ambulance.

› For the basis of the decision of not guilty the court pointed out that there was no legal reason for the police to conduct an advanced blockade against people who were only trying to take supplies via kayak. The situation was never classified as an emergency by the police to enable them to legally take advantage and blockade against the people. Therefore, it was the police who committed illegal execution of public duty. Therefore the court stated that there were no charges that could be laid against the six accused from Gangjeong.

› The same court handed down the decision of 1 year imprisonment with 3 years suspended to Kim Miryang for a separate case years ago when Miryang was indicted for the charge of damaging a police's two-way radio. As soon as the result of this case was known Miryang filed an appeal to the high court to fight the sentence.

› Also at the High Court, Kim Kook-Nam, a peace activist, was handed down the decision of not guilty for the charge of obstruction justice but was ordered to pay a fine of approximately 450 USD in relation to the charge for insult. Kim received the 1st court decision of six month imprisonment with two years suspended, along with 120 hours of social work. Lastly, the High Court handed down the decision of not guilty to Kim Hak-ku, another peace activist, who had received the court's decision of a 90 USD fine for the charge of insult.

Must Gangjeong sell the village association building to pay for the crackdown?

By Joyakgol

Walking down the road to Gangjeong port, one can see the new 5 apartment buildings rise little by little everyday. They are the military housing complex that expand over the naval base fence to the edge of the village, which has created so much controversy across the island and resistance from the villagers. Even the newly-elected Jeju Governor from the conservative ruling party opposed the Ministry of Defense's (MoD) plan. The Navy, again, didn't care and just went ahead with the brutal crackdown on villagers' tents and other facilities in the name of executive order to implement.

The Navy hired one hundred thugs and spent 90 million won (about 81,000 USD) for the job. The MoD have sent two letters to the Gangjeong village association demanding us to pay for these expenses. Finally, they gave us the ultimatum of a October 25 deadline. After that deadline they will take compulsory executive steps, most likely the seizures of village property.

How more cruel can a democratic government be to its own people? Gangjeong villagers and peace supporters have been punished with criminal fines of 400 million won. There seems no other way but to sell the village hall building to be able to have this amount of money. What more should the villagers do to defend their beloved community? Leave them alone. The navy should drop their threatening and apologize to the people.

Preparing for the Long Defeat: Please Come visit Gangjeong

By Bow

"Being a peace activist is not easy," said Marco a member of the international team, whose bilingual abilities enables the Japanese speaking world to receive up-to-date news about the Gangjeong struggle. His words had a revolutionary ring, as though he was only now realizing he was involved in an impossible task.

In 2012, I found out there was a tiny island that was resisting the construction of a massive naval base. While it seemed obvious to oppose such a large scale military presence in a rural area, I was less concerned with political opinion towards militarism than I was with the acts of daily resistance. These acts of bowing and sit-ins, the human blockades, impressed upon me a form of human resilience. Three years later, I arrive on Jeju Island for the first time to partake in these acts of protest. The activists, artists, and locals gathered in Gangjeong year-round opposing operations that enable both humans and machinery to take away lives. The Gangjeong resistance is multifaceted. Even though the most obvious actions are those of physical protest, behind the scenes, programming, outreach, and self-care have sustained the resistance eight years and counting.

There is much to do in Gangjeong, and I urge readers to consider making a trip to Jeju. Spending time on the ground as both an active learner and participant has taught me much more than the importance of both civic participation and anti-militarism in order to sustain life. Being physically present amidst the naval base resistance has altered my vision of life as cumulative, instead, I now see the trajectory of subjects oppressed by the state as a long-defeat. The individual never wins, but has to learn how to live resiliently amidst daily loss.

“Who profits from war?”

By Bokhee

An international seminar titled “Who profits from war? - Ways of resistance to stand against the war industry” was held at Seoul Women’s Plaza over two days, October 16th and 17th. Many peace activists from different parts of the world gathered to educate one another on the structure of the military-economic cycle which is closely related to everyday lives of ordinary citizens. This included not only arms and armies but also ammunitions, transportation, food, cleaning, translation services and private security services. There were workshops to share activists’ experiences such as creating and carrying out a strategy campaign, research methods of war-beneficiaries, direct actions for resistance, etc. and discussions seeking plans for international solidarity that resist against war-profiteering were also discussed. After the seminar, the participants went on to prepare for the protest confronting the ADEX arms exhibition which opened on October 19th along with other various campaigns. I travelled from Gangjeong Village to participate in the Seminar and protest.

I always thought of my peace activities as a passionate hobby, but meeting the peace activists from Seoul and many other countries during this seminar has strongly motivated me. I believe that sharing our experiences of resistance activities, which could be greatly empathized across many different countries and circumstances, was a huge encouragement for all the activists involved. Many people came to participate in the workshop that Palestinian activist Karam and I hosted. Many international activists were interested in the Gangjeong struggle after they were introduced to it by activists from ‘World Without War’, with some who had already came across Gangjeong’s news via social media. I hope this I can take this experience of resistance activity practice and the information from the seminar and have a positive influence on Gangjeong’s naval base opposition movement.

Image by Hwang Hyunjin. Hotpinkdolphins and Gangjeong peace activists are protesting during Korea-Australia joint navy drill on Busan-Jeju sea on Octover 26.

How You Can Help

1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to stop the Jeju base project and to the US government to stop the support for it.
2. Write letters to Gangjeong's prisoners of conscience.
3. Stay updated by joining our Facebook groups and following us on twitter.
4. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, etc...)
5. Then share about it on social media.
6. Visit Gangjeong!
7. For other ways to help and more visit us on the web.

For More Information

http://www.SaveJejuNow.org
http://www.facebook.com/groups/NoNavalBase
http://www.facebook.com/SaveJeju
http://www.twitter.com/SaveJejuNow

For Gangjeong related videos, visit savejejunow.org or check these Vimeo/Youtube users :

Vimeo : cho sung bong / DH Song / Regis Tremblay
Youtube : Gang-Jeong Il-Gi / Shalomsea / 1234yz100 / Sungbong2012

— Created and designed by the Gangjeong International Team, special thanks to Everyday Practice.
— Published by the Gangjeong Village Association, 4417 Gangjeong-dong, the Life and Peace village, Seogwipo-si, Jeju, the Peace Island. Email: gjengnews@gmail.com
— Special thanks to Gangjeong Friends for financial support.

Photo Studio in Gangjeong

By Choi Sungku

Long ago in the past when digital cameras weren't common, people used to go to photo studios to take family photos for special occasions. These occasions included graduations and other family celebrations.

Photographer Lee Woo-ki, Noh Sun-Tak, Jeong Tak-Yong and Park Sueng-Hwa joined us from Seoul and made a temporary photo studio on the second floor of the Peace Center. Some of photographers recorded villagers' regular lives in Gangjeong village. They also participated in sailing for fish with Miryang's fisherman brothers and took photos in the middle of Gangjeong Sea to capture their lives in the sea. They also took a family photo for us on October 24th in the Saint Francisco Peace Center.

Over 30 families and friends came to the studio to have their pictures taken. Some of them arrived alone while others came with family or friends. One elderly villagers Mr. Yoon (Sang-hyo) came with 10 family members who live in Jeju city. They received a large family picture. Gangjeong elementary school kids came to take pictures with friends. Many peace activists as well enjoyed special photo sessions with friends, some of the photo sessions included our little old dog which is considered a family member. Photos will be printed in approximately 2 weeks and handed to everyone.

Image by Pang Eunmi/ On Oct. 25, Gangjoeng village won the Daecheon-dong sports game. The Daechen-dong district is composed of five sub-districts including Gangjeong.

Image by Gangjeong Village Story/ Keep Space for Peace Week (Oct. 3 to 10) in Gangjeong. No Jeju Naval Base!